

the firefighters who respond to catastrophic Federal emergencies like we recently experienced in California.

I want the firefighters to have constant monitoring about their health. I want them to be able to have access to health care that they deserve. That is what my bill will do.

At least 15 studies have shown statistical links between brain cancer and firefighting. According to the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, firefighters often jeopardize their health when they respond to disaster. Often these disasters are so severe that their equipment cannot even protect them. The health consequences for these firefighters can be as great as cancer or heart disease.

In nearly all of these instances where firefighters have responded to Federal disaster, they have often been provided with very little or no health monitoring. This is wrong, and we must change it to make sure that there is monitoring.

Firefighters risk their lives protecting our property, our families, our way of life. They deserve better. We must have more resources devoted to monitoring firefighters after they respond to Federal emergencies when there is prolonged exposure to dangerous smoke, fumes, and chemicals.

A program like this was developed after the collapse of the World Trade Center. It has been very successful in identifying the health problems of those first responders.

□ 2015

Many of these firefighters at the World Trade Center suffered serious coughing illness after dealing with the wreckage of the towers. Thanks to monitoring programs, we can evaluate the health of these fire responders and get them the care that they need.

I want early detection for the men and women who responded to fires in California. I want them to be able to go back to their families safe and healthy. We must make sure that our firefighters are safe and healthy after they respond to a Federal disaster. We must make sure that we decrease such possible risk.

We owe a great gratitude to these brave men and women who fought the recent fires in California and the Inland Empire. Providing them adequate health care is the least we can do to say thanks to these American heroes.

ROOTING OUT WASTE, FRAUD AND ABUSE IN GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KING of Iowa). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, my Washington Waste Watcher colleagues and I, Republican members of the freshman class, have come to the floor tonight to devise new and innovative ways for trimming the fat out of government. I believe we owe it to the

American taxpayer to hold Washington bureaucrats accountable for wasteful spending and to discover new ways for reducing fraud in government at all levels. A great American from Ellijay, Georgia, Mr. Joe McCutchen, reminds me of this at least once a month.

Mr. Speaker, after spending 28 years as an OB-GYN doctor, it should be no surprise that part of my legislative agenda is to reorganize and revamp this Medicare program, which is currently responsible for billions of dollars of waste, fraud and abuse. The General Accounting Office has estimated that one of every 10 dollars is wasted because our current Medicare system is open to poor management and fraud. Dishonest individuals find new and more creative ways to cheat our Medicare system every day, burdening Americans with higher taxes, higher premiums, and higher copays.

For example, according to the Bureau of National Affairs in an April 25, 2003, article of "Health Care Daily," a Florida woman was sentenced for her role in a scheme that allegedly billed Medicare and Medicaid more than \$25 million worth of false claims for, get this, wheelchairs, alternating pressure mattresses, and other durable medical equipment; \$25 million of taxpayer money that is lost and unrefundable, money that could have been used to improve our schools or aid our soldiers in Iraq or provide health care for the uninsured.

Another example comes from the Health and Human Services Inspector General report to Congress, April 2000. It was reported that Medicare paid an estimated \$20.6 million for services that started after the posted death dates of certain recipients. My good friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), just a few minutes earlier mentioned the same thing. Of this amount, \$8 million was paid, despite the fact the Department had already noted their deaths in the main database.

These are just examples of the mismanagement of time and resources that are costing Americans billions of dollars every year. In these times of war and emphasis on homeland security, we cannot afford to spend another dollar on wasteful programs, and we must save money by eradicating fraud against and within the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to restore responsibility and accountability to government programs by rooting out this waste, fraud and abuse in our government. I urge my colleagues to help pass needed Medicare reform.

REPUBLICAN EFFORT TO PRIVATIZE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss something I believe goes vir-

tually unsaid in this institution every day, not merely the ramifications of what Congress does on a daily basis, but rather the underlying intentions of those in the majority. And that is how this majority, in concert with the administration, is acting to remake how our Nation governs and thinks of itself. Indeed, it is remaking the very role of government itself.

I think it is particularly appropriate that we discuss this matter at a time when Congress is heading toward its annual appropriations endgame, when many of the most important budgetary decisions affecting millions of citizens are being made behind closed doors by a handful in this Republican majority. So this week I am going to be talking about Republican efforts to privatize functions that are currently the responsibility of government and specifically how that relates to our failure to meet public commitments.

Let me be clear: the goal is not more government. Far from it. In most cases, we want our business enterprises and the market to flourish. But there are some very important areas where we want community values, not the market, to prevail or to set limits on behavior. There is a reason we have public schools, environmental regulation, and retirement programs, because there are things we want to ensure for all individuals, whatever their station in life or wherever they live in the country.

For nearly 75 years, our approach to government has reflected the idea that our society can act with a shared sense of purpose and responsibility to address tasks before our country. But it is no secret that this leadership has some very different ideas about the role of the Federal Government and helping us meet those challenges. Accordingly, the budget Republicans put forward earlier this year was designed simply and efficiently to destroy the capacity and obligation of the government to provide key social support. Their plans are to debase the quality of public services so much that citizens will give up and turn, out of necessity, to the private market.

The examples are many, and they are far-reaching. The twin pillars of our retirement security safety net, Social Security and Medicare, environmental protection, transportation safety, education, all public commitments historically the responsibility of the Federal Government, all undermined by this administration and majority.

Republicans pass legislation to create new tests and higher standards for public schools, then support a budget that cuts the funding to enforce those standards by \$8 billion, in effect guaranteeing failure and providing a justification for the shift to vouchers and private education.

Their Medicare plans offer prescription drug coverage for seniors, but moves seniors into the private insurance market and into HMOs for their Medicare coverage. The budget cuts